

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for separating from one another contiguous items in a substantially vertical stack that are frictionally engaged to one another, so that said items are disengaged from one another upon entering into a sheet feeder, comprising:

a rocker plate positioned at a lowermost end of said vertical stack; and

said rocker plate adapted to support said stack of contiguous items;

rocking means for causing said rocker plate to oscillate in a vertical plane as said sheet feeder operates;

said items being adapted to follow a longitudinal path of travel upon entering into said sheet feeder;

a rocker bar transversely disposed relative to said longitudinal path of travel;

said rocker bar being positioned in a substantially vertical plane;

said rocker bar being mounted for pivotal movement about a transversely disposed axis;

said rocker plate being fixedly secured to a flat top wall of said pivotally mounted rocker bar; and

said rocking means being connected to said rocker bar;

said rocker plate, when oscillating in said vertical plane, causing said items to oscillate in said vertical plane; and

said rocker plate adapted to oscillate in said vertical plane when said apparatus is operating;

whereby items in said bin are jostled by said oscillation of said rocker plate, said jostling breaking frictional bonds between contiguous items.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously amended) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

a drive shaft transversely disposed relative to said longitudinal path of travel;

said drive shaft rotating about its axis of rotation when said sheet feeder is operating;

a cam secured to said drive shaft for conjoint rotation therewith;

a cam follower biased to bear against said cam;

said cam follower being connected to said rocker bar and causing said rocker bar to reciprocate about said transversely disposed axis when said drive shaft is rotating.

4. (original) The apparatus of claim 3, further comprising a base plate that overlies said rocker plate and that is longitudinally adjustably mounted relative to said rocker plate to accommodate items in said bin of differing longitudinal extents.

5. (original) The apparatus of claim 3, further comprising:
a longitudinally extending slot formed in said rocker plate;
an aperture formed in said base plate; and
a screw having a stem that extends through said aperture and through said slot;
said screw having a head with a diameter greater than a breadth of said aperture and a nut that engages said stem on an underside of said rocker plate so that said base plate is adjustable along the length of said slot when said nut is loosened and so that said base plate is held into a preselected position when the nut is tightened.

6. (new) An apparatus for separating from one another contiguous items in a substantially vertical stack that are frictionally engaged to one another, so that said items are disengaged from one another upon entering into a sheet feeder, comprising:

a rocker plate positioned at a lowermost end of said vertical stack;
rocking means for causing said rocker plate to oscillate as said sheet feeder operates;
said items being adapted to follow a longitudinal path of travel upon entering into said sheet feeder;

a rocker bar transversely disposed relative to said longitudinal path of travel;
said rocker bar being mounted for pivotal movement about a transversely disposed axis;
said rocker plate being fixedly secured to said pivotally mounted rocker bar;
said rocking means being connected to said rocker bar;
a drive shaft transversely disposed relative to said longitudinal path of travel;
said drive shaft rotating about its axis of rotation when said sheet feeder is operating;
a cam secured to said drive shaft for conjoint rotation therewith;
a cam follower biased to bear against said cam;
said cam follower being connected to said rocker bar and causing said rocker bar to reciprocate about said transversely disposed axis when said drive shaft is rotating;

a base plate that overlies said rocker plate and that is longitudinally adjustably mounted relative to said rocker plate to accommodate items in said bin of differing longitudinal extents;
a longitudinally extending slot formed in said rocker plate;
an aperture formed in said base plate;
a screw having a stem that extends through said aperture and through said slot; and
said screw having a head with a diameter greater than a breadth of said aperture and a nut that engages said stem on an underside of said rocker plate so that said base plate is adjustable along the length of said slot when said nut is loosened and so that said base plate is held into a preselected position when the nut is tightened;
whereby items in said bin are jostled by said oscillation of said rocker plate, said jostling breaking frictional bonds between contiguous items.